

Protective Footwear

Workplace hazards to the feet

Your toes, ankles and feet are exposed to a wide range of injuries at work. The proper footwear helps protect your feet against:

- Injuries from objects falling onto or rolling over the feet
- Injuries from objects that could pierce the sole of a shoe or boot
- Exposure to electrical hazards
- Chemicals and solvents
- Temperature extremes
- Fungal infections caused by wetness.

Types of protective footwear

Safety shoes or boots

The basic safety shoe or boot is designed to protect your feet against impact, compression, or puncture:

- **Impact Protection** – used by workers who handle heavy materials or tools that could be dropped on the feet
- **Compression Protection** – helps prevent injuries from heavy objects such as carts, pipes or paper rolls that could roll over the feet
- **Puncture Resistant Footwear** – used by carpenters, metal workers and others who could step on nails, scrap metal or other sharp objects.

Some common features of protective footwear include:

- Safety toe – protects against falling objects or weight pressing against your toe
- Cushion between the toe cap and the foot – offers comfort and insulation
- Steel insole – for puncture protection
- Special soles – made from assorted materials for protection against a variety of hazards
 - a) Special insulating/conducting: protection against electrical hazards
 - b) Static dissipative: designed for areas where small discharges of electricity could damage electronic equipment; also protects against some ranges of high voltage.

Options

Other options in protective footwear include:

- Shoes or boots with instep protection

- Insulated boots for protection against extreme temperatures
- Boots with built-in ankle protection
- Rubber or plastic safety boots (to protect your feet from water, oil, acids, corrosives and chemicals)
- Foundry shoes with elastic gores rather than laces to provide easy removal in case sparks or hot metal get inside
- Add-on protection
 - a) Metatarsal guards
 - b) Shoe covers
 - c) Rubber spats
 - d) Strap-on cleats
 - e) Puncture-proof steel inserts.

Proper fit and selection of foot protection

The most important element in a good safety boot or shoe is how well it fits you. Since proper fit is so important:

- Select safety shoes or boots at the end of the day when your feet are a bit swollen
- Have both of your feet measured

***Note:** The best fit will be the length of the longer foot and the width of the wider one*

- Try to walk on the type of surface you work on.

***Note:** All protective footwear purchased after July 5, 1994 must comply with the latest American National Standards Institute, ANSI (Z41) standards. Equipment purchased before the July date must comply with the 1967 ANSI standards.*